

# Growing in God's Love

Camps with Meaning Curriculum, 2020

by Maria Dueck (2015); adapted by Sandy Plett, 2020

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## Introduction

I am inclined to rename the theme of this summer to Growing in God's Love. Growth is mysterious and open ended, as is our walk with God as humans. We can never completely know God. God is in many ways a mystery that gets deeper every day we spend in it. However, there are certain things we can know about God that hold us through the mystery. God is love. God loves us. God speaks when we listen. God is always waiting for us. This revision focuses on three things we can do to nourish our own growth in God: prayer, connecting with others who are growing in God's Love and learning the stories of the Bible.

As I write this, the unfolding of summer 2020 is yet to be determined. Rather than re-writing and revising the document of 2015, I have provided some guiding ideas for how to use that document in a very different context. Please feel free to refer to the original document for ideas and background. Notice that the outline of the week has been revised here to a 5-day set of lessons.

The circumstance of the 2020 global pandemic invites us to focus our teaching on the issues that the children of our communities are facing. *Let's invite the Spirit of God to infuse our planning and teaching with wisdom and insight into the needs of these children and their families in what has been an unusual and difficult season.*

## Memory Verse Suggestion:

- A mantra or something to repeat, "I am growing in God's Love! You are growing in God's Love! We are growing in God's love!"
- Jeremiah 17:7-8
- Psalm 1: 1-3

- Bible Leaders, feel free to come up with other verses for memory!
- Song Suggestion: The Tree Song is a perfect song for this curriculum. A golden oldie!

## **Outline of lessons:**

The content you choose to deliver will depend greatly on the format of delivery and the ages/sizes of the audience. Follow your intuition on this!

- A few guiding principles:
- Less is more –don't try to cram all the information/ideas into a short lesson. In the following section I've made suggestions to help you select key concepts for focus for each day.
- Let the stories/activities do the teaching. A few well-chosen words can clarify ideas and questions. Use verbal teaching sparingly, use action and stories liberally!

## **Day 1 Seeds: From seed to giant**

Framework:

All growth begins with a seed

- Trees, vegetables, flowers, crops –all begin with seeds
- Seeds need proper conditions (water, sun, soil) to grow
- Human bodies are designed to grow too. We need food, shelter, and safety to grow up healthy and strong. Look at all the growing you've already done

Humans are also designed to grow spiritually –that is, we are designed to live and grow in the mystery of God's love. We're going to call this growing in God's love. This is a life of Faith! This is the life of our mind and soul and spirit.

You are growing physically, but you are also growing in God's Love! Think of your faith in God as a tree, growing strong and tall inside of you. The tiny seed began to grow the moment you were born. Now you have the chance to learn about how that faith grows and becomes stronger!

## **Day 2 Roots: Tree roots make trees strong. The roots of our faith make us strong as we grow in God's Love**

Framework:

Tree roots dig deep into the soil, gather food, store food and nutrition. This makes the tree strong! Able to withstand bad weather, drought, the presence of parasites, woodpeckers, etc.

The roots of our faith are things like

- prayer (talking to and listening to God) –practice this
- being connected to others who are growing in God's Love,
- stories from the Bible that shape our understanding of God
- Please feel free to add other things here!

These things make our faith strong! Strong roots help us to withstand hard times, good times, the ups and downs of life.

## **Day 3 Trunk: The story of how we are growing in God's love.**

Framework:

- The trunk shows the life story of the tree and each one is unique. Our trunk shows the story of our faith lives, and gets stronger, helps us to weather storms, etc. This is the day that invites stories of doubt, mystery, uncertainty.
- What do the stories of others teach us about what it is to grow in God's love?
- What is the strength at the center of our faith?
- Growing in God doesn't mean always understanding everything about God, but it means trusting in the mystery of God no matter what comes our way.

## **Day 4 Leaves and Branches: Learning from Jesus' life**

Framework:

- The part of the tree that we mostly notice is the top part –the leaves and branches, the flowers, etc. The part of people that we notice is the way they live, the things they do, the way they treat others.
- The top of the tree can create shade, shelter for animals, gathers up sunlight and water for growth. These are the functions of the upper part of the tree to help the tree grow and to help those around.

- The leaves and branches of a tree are like the way people live. Just like there are amazing trees to look at and learn from, we have the most amazing life to look at and learn from. That's the life of Jesus!
- The life of Jesus is full of examples of how we are invited to life as people, growing in God's love.

## **Day 5 Fruit and flowers, nuts, and seeds: The results of Growing in God's Love**

Framework:

- The way that plants and trees share their goodness with the world is through their fruit, flowers, nuts, and seeds, etc. We also bear fruit and share goodness with the world through our actions and the way we live.
- The fruit of trees is delicious and amazing. Think of all the gifts that plants give to the world around them –food, shelter, shade, wood, oxygen, beauty, etc. Plants are designed to deliver these things! It's built into their growth cycle!
- The growth plan of people growing in God's love also includes the sharing of goodness! The Spirit of God in us moves us to share our gifts, and God's goodness flows out of us in many ways. This includes the fruit of the spirit, the gifts, and talents of each of us, etc.